

INTERVIEWEE: SANDY CARTER

INTERVIEWER: Victor Cohen

DATE: January 9, 2010

SC: In the like mid-sixties and early sixties and getting started as a folks singer, blues singer, playing in a place called Threadgills, started by this guy named Kenny Threadgill, who had idolized Jimmy Rogers. He saw Jimmy Rogers when Jimmy Rogers was a big star, then he had learned to yodel from Jimmy Rogers. He's really a great character, and wonderful, nice man, who started bands and then eventually a club where he'd have all the young people in. Austin had already become kind of – even when I went out to school there, in my hometown, which is absolutely right-wing reactionary, you know, Amarillo and Lubbock. (chuckles) Friends had the idea that was where you went to school if you were a communist or an atheist. So you were like betraying civilization by going there.

[recorder off, then resumes]

VC: Just for the record, it is the 9th of January 2010, and I'm sitting here with Sandy Carter. So anyway, you were saying, if I really want to track this down?

SC: Well, I worked with Ed putting on the 50th Anniversary show of the Ash Grove at UCLA in April of '08. Aside from helping coordinate that, and emceeing, and stuff like that, I also did several workshops. One of them was like a music in politics thing, so we talked about – and it would be in the archives there, if you want to go back to it. I talked about kind of the history of the Left as a context for understanding the Ash Grove and what was going on at the Ash Grove, and then

putting the Ash Grove in the context of things going on in the sixties and seventies, and then how that's linked to stuff going on now. I also worked with Ed getting a new Ash Grove started at the Santa Monica Pier in the mid-nineties.

But our link was, I was also in the New American Movement. I got into it in Texas, in Austin, after I'd been – by that time I was immersed in the politics of the sixties and all the different movements and stuff like that. I had just come back from working three or four years in the Midwest in the VISTA program. And then we were doing political work in Austin. Then I went over to L.A. in the summer, in probably '73, '74, which was not long after the Ash Grove had burned down.

VC: Right, the third time.

SC: Ed was in the New American Movement then, and I knew about the Ash Grove ahead of that time. I was hearing about it even as a pretty young person, back in Texas, because I was hugely into music and everything.

When I got there, and I was working with the Venice chapter, and that's where Ed was working, too. People said, Hey, Ed would probably want to meet you because you're so into music and politics and stuff. You'd probably like Ed. He's the guy with the Ash Grove. I said, "Oh, yeah. Gosh, yeah." Because I knew all about the Ash Grove. So that's how we hooked up, and then from then on we've had a link and done projects together and stuff like that.

VC: Can you tell me – I'm fascinated – how did you hook up with the New American Movement? Was that in Austin?

SC: I hooked up with it in Austin about the time just after it began.

VC: Like '72?

SC: Yeah. My friends and I, a lot of them went back to Austin with me from the Midwest, because we worked in Omaha, Nebraska. Most of them did. We were living and working in north Omaha, which is the black ghetto area of Omaha. In fact, it's where Malcolm X was born. We did all kinds of projects there, from welfare rights and housing issues, and tons of stuff. But one of the things that I did is, I got involved in also journalism there and working on a community newspaper in the black community and starting some other things. We wanted to continue on and create something.

VC: So you liked the VISTA experience.

SC: Yeah. When I got in, it was not as controlled as it would later become, and I had pretty much cover from the agency that I was working in. I mean, clearly, our purpose there was to change things in a fundamental way and upset the power structure as best we could. But, obviously, you're working for the government also, so they're going to be cautious about what you get involved in. If you start upsetting things too much, then your agency's grant might be pulled for all this kind of stuff.

For me, it was a great thing, because I got all this great experience doing on the ground organizing, and also, if you're familiar with VISTA, you know, especially in those days, you lived in the community you were working in, and you lived at that income level, or even less. I and a few other people were the only white people on this side of town, so for me, it was just a huge, huge grounding of my politics and vision in real struggle.

VC: When was that that you started with VISTA?

SC: I started there in about '69, '70, going through the training and all that kind of stuff. Also, what helped was, as I said, we were working for an agency that was black-run and controlled. They basically covered what we were doing so that we wouldn't get in trouble. Every once in a while we would. Like I got involved in covering a trial of the local Black Panthers who were charged with some murders. And once the government found out that, they wanted that to stop. So I got word of that, and then the rest of my coverage of that trial was under a different name. But it was that kind of thing, so – all through there.

So anyway, my friends and I came back to Austin. I had convinced them that Austin was a really cool place, and they had visited once and they really liked it. SDS had had a really powerful chapter there. The New American Movement was starting and it had the kind of politics that all of us generally agreed with, which we saw, compared to the Marxist/Leninist left, as being more libertarian, as being more interested in participatory democracy and democratic ways of working, and so on. The Austin chapter was a good chapter, and it was pretty big. I met a woman there who was from L.A., so I went back with her one summer, to be with her.

And then while I was doing that I decided that I was going to work in the Venice chapter. While I was there I met Dorothy Healy and all the old Communists of L.A. Did some radio programs and did all kinds of things there. But that was the link with Ed, so it was kind of an instant connection, and that worked to keep us together from that point till now, with gaps while we did different things.

VC: When did you start getting into music?

SC: As a kid growing up in Texas, I'm hearing country music all the time. My mother was really into that, so I'm hearing it all the time. Then I was there for the early days of rock and roll, growing up. So all that's having a huge influence on me. I'm not growing up in a family where there's books around or anything. My father has an eighth grade education. He worked in a zinc factory there and then later got a job as a mechanic working on the airbase there. My mother always worked. But music was the first thing that gave me a sense of a broader society than what I saw around me, which I was always struggling against, even from another age, trying to figure out how I was going to survive this, and what else there was.

Over time, aside from listening to music all the time and it becoming kind of a cultural guide to me, and even a political guide for me, and maybe the thing that was awaking my politics and sensibility more than anything else, started singing, writing songs, learned to play guitar, and all that kind of stuff. So that's how the music thing connected with my politics. And then that just continued to grow and grow and grow in the sixties.

VC: Were there any artists that stick out in your mind? When you were growing up, when you said _____.

SC: An interesting thing about that part of the country, and Lubbock more so than Amarillo, as you might know, all these great singer-songwriters have come out of Lubbock. Buddy Holly was from Lubbock, Waylon Jennings just outside of Lubbock, and then a whole group of singer-songwriters who have influence who became kind of alternative country people, like Jimmy Dale Gilmore and Joe Ely

and Terry Allen, and Angela Straley was from there. Who else? Butch Hancock. And I could just keep naming them, keep naming them. Later, the Dixie Chicks. Because this is like really isolated communities, both Lubbock and Amarillo. But Lubbock is also cotton country, so you had the blues in there from that, mixing with the country music.

And then for certain people who are – and you're desperate for something to do, some way to not go crazy. Just about everybody I know that got out of there or became a musician, they all talk about it almost in the same exact terms that I'm talking to you. They have a love-hate relationship with the country, but most of them all left it once they came of age. They started playing music to keep themselves sane, and also picking up on the music that was around there, but they're also being informed by the politics of the Civil Rights Movement and the Antiwar Movement and the counter-cultural lifestyle of its coming.

So what's shaking them up and shaking me up is like Elvis Presley comes along, and that's a huge thing in my town. I remember still in grade school going in to school one morning and a girl in the class saying, "You know what? This guy named Elvis Presley played at the Paramount Theater last night, and the people went crazy, and they tore up seats, and they ransacked the place." I thought, Oh, that's pretty neat. (laughs) So I started listening to Elvis Presley and tracking Elvis Presley down. That was just like earth-shaking.

VC: Right. So it wasn't like Pete Seeger.

SC: No. I didn't know about any of the left-wing stuff. I did begin to get some of the left folk music in the early sixties. I was beginning to listen to a lot of stuff, but the

TV program was on playing off the folk boom with *Hootenanny*. On *Hootenanny* they would have – obviously, it would be mostly things like Kingston Trio or the Highwaymen or something like that. You'd have Pete Seeger on there and you'd have some of the new younger folk singers. I got one of Dylan then, and that also was one of those earth-shaking moments.

I'm also, again, like all these other guys that I just mentioned, I'm listening to Border Radio coming out of Mexico and Wolfman Jack, and I'm also listening to WLS radio station in Chicago, which you'd get late at night, so you're listening next to your radio late at night in bed. On those stations, you're hearing real authentic real blues and urban blues, Chicago blues. And the same thing out of Mexico with Wolfman Jack playing all this stuff. So I'm hearing for the first time Muddy Waters and Helen Wolfe and Little Walter and all of that, and that's phenomenal. And I've always been listening to – although sometimes with very mixed feelings – listening to Hank Williams and Lefty Frizzell and all of that. So all this stuff is just kind of coming together.

It's also awakening my resistance to racism, by getting this view of the black experience. It's coming through the blues. And thinking of these people performing the blues as being incredible artists who I absolutely love and idolize, and yet, these are their conditions, this is their situation in the world. During that period is when I'm getting a sense – I can't just know this stuff, I've got to try to do something about it.

VC: And this was in middle school and high school.

SC: Yeah. That's when it's beginning to percolate, but not till I get more out on my own can I really do anything that's more organized, besides challenging on a personal level or something when I'm around friends, or something like that. And I'm continuing to try to learn what I can. But it was growing, all this was growing. And then I went to junior college for a couple years before I went to the University of Texas.

By then, I'm smoking pot for the first time and doing that, and becoming more counter-cultural. One of friends who is – I don't know if you know – it was this guy named J.D. Souther, who later became a singer-songwriter, and he left Texas at that point to go to California to try to make it as a musician. He later hooked up with Jackson Browne and they wrote songs for the Eagles. He had some hits there with them. But he was like sending letters back home, or sometimes we'd see him, and he was telling us what was going on in California, which was ahead of, obviously, what was happening in Texas. In towns like I was growing up in there were just like a few weird people. And we're all looking to leave and find others that are more like us, somewhere. We're thinking, oh God, we're hearing all about San Francisco and things in L.A. and things in other parts of the country.

But in Texas you'd also hear about Austin, so I definitely wanted to be there. Once I was there, then I was beginning to get involved politically, doing all the things that people were doing, demonstrating and organizing demonstrations, and that kind of stuff. Then by the time that was over, or the time I had graduated, I was also facing the draft.

VC: Were you in SDS at all?

SC: No. When I got there I was on the periphery of SDS at the University of Texas. It was so new to me, I didn't even quite understand what they were doing or what they were talking about. But I was gradually finding out and going to events and all that kind of stuff. In the time I was getting close to graduation, I was ready for it then, but by then I wanted to do something more than be a part of a student organization or something. I wanted more of a community experience, in particular in the black community, in an urban situation, which I felt like I wanted to do something to challenge what was going on there. And that was good.

When I did go there it was like a war zone. I mean, I was picked up by police countless times for just being there. Why are you here? What are you doing? Are you selling drugs? And being pulled over on false charges all the time. We've heard you're carrying explosives. We've heard you came out of this bar and they said you're carrying a weapon. This kind of stuff. Harassment all the time. As well as certainly all the black activists that were there were getting the same thing. But through all of that, that just deeply internalized my politics and my convictions, and I got a first-hand feel for it.

VC: So then when you got back to Austin –

SC: So when I got back to Austin, we wanted to continue on and keep things going. Now, looking back, it looks very naive, but at the time swept up in everything that was going on, which is hard for a lot of people to feel nowadays. I didn't have the feeling that revolution was around the corner, but I did have the feeling that gradually through my lifetime we would continue to push forward, and progressive changes would keep coming, and maybe down the road that would happen. We

were trying to lay a foundation for that and bring as many changes to society as we could, and also create alternative structures and institutions and values that could mirror, foreshadow, a better society, a better world

And I always saw music as being that way, as being able to do that, and that's why I was so inspired by the Ash Grove. That was what Ed was trying to do. And there wasn't any place like that, that I knew of. Although there were plenty of clubs and folk clubs and stuff like that, but nothing so politically conscious and so intent on showing the relationship of the communities that this music came out of to the music, and how that fit with things that were going on in the world, and through that, bringing different communities together. In that period, a lot of young people who didn't know about those communities, hadn't experienced them firsthand, but also didn't even have any understanding of this music, hadn't really been exposed to it. Most people hadn't grown up listening to Wolfman Jack and WSL, and all this other stuff, or hadn't grown up in the South where a lot of that music came from, and so on.

Ed wanted to show that, so if he puts on the Stanley Brothers, he's not putting on the Stanley Brothers without trying to show the context of the music and having other things besides their performance that highlight that—photographs, union organizers from that part of the country coming in, some elucidation of the historical context of the music from the stage, all of that.

VC: When was the first time you heard about the Ash Grove? Do you remember?

SC: I was hearing about it probably by the mid-sixties.

VC: In what context?

SC: Not enough to really understand everything that was going on there. I didn't have appreciation of that. And my appreciation of the history of the Communist Party and all the left politics, I didn't know a lot about that then, and I didn't know a lot about the early folk movement, or the left folk movement, I didn't know a lot about that.

What I was hearing was, I'd hear people talk about the Ash Grove, and I'd hear others in my crowd who were musicians talk about who played there. So I knew these blues guys were playing there, I knew these country guys and folk guys were playing there. And automatically, at that time, if any club or venue was presenting these people, then I knew they must be progressive because you wouldn't do that for any other reason. Because the people that are going look like me. (chuckles) Except some of the older people that are there and stuff. So I was hearing that, and gradually it was making more sense.

And by the mid-sixties and into the late sixties, then Ed was also – the club was constantly being changed through the sixties, so he was beginning to present the younger performers, people my age, who had learned this music from the elders, or were trying to learn it, and they were performing. So that's Ry Cooder and Taj Mahal and Canned Heat and others. The guys in the Byrds, like Roger McGuinn and everybody, they're playing there, too, and they're all tied up in the protest and showing up at festivals and stuff, and doing fundraisers, and all this kind of stuff. So it's beginning to make sense to me what the Ash Grove is about. It's one of the clubs that everybody I know that was going out to L.A., they were talking about the Ash Grove.

VC: Really. And there was not a club like that in Austin.

SC: There were clubs that nurtured the folk scene. And those were places where you could go and hear, say, Jack Elliott, when he came to town, and others. You could also hear some of the young people that were starting out in Texas, trying to write their own songs and were part of the culture. And little places like I mentioned, Threadgills, where Janis Joplin was playing. So all the people that were beginning to turn into this counter-culture were living and breathing in these clubs.

Then from there, a lot of them would go to California, or some would go to New York. But in Texas, most of the people that I knew, and still to this day, if they migrated they went west, they didn't go east. So I was one of those, too.

My understanding of how all this linked back to left traditions from the beginning of the century onward, I didn't have that until I got more historical knowledge of the Left.

VC: Was that with NAM?

SC: It was happening during that period, because as I became an activist, like a lot of us, we were – at least the people that I was closest to were feeling like, if you're going to do this, you need to really know history, and you need to know the whole history of the country, and you need to understand society as a whole, as a totality, and you kind of have to be a Renaissance intellectual. So, aside from listening to all kinds of music, I was also reading tons of history, as well as Marxism and different Marxist writers and intellectuals, and not just those that wrote about politics in the big sense, in the economy, but those that wrote also about art and

culture. I was using that for my analysis of culture and how culture worked to either build consensus or disrupt it.

As I was doing that, then I'm getting, gradually, the sense of the whole history of the Left in music, which is kind of groundwork for the Ash Grove and also my relationship to Ed. Ed, being older than I am, he actually came – when I met him I thought of Left Ed. Even though I was meeting him in the New American Movement, he was older than any of us, most of us. And he was more like an old leftist. When he was being politicized, he was being politicized by the older Left, because he was a younger person, so he was getting the Communist Party influence, and he knew about Seeger and Woody Guthrie and Cisco Houston and all those people. When the club was started in '58, that was what he was trying to bring to it, that was one of the things that was informing his vision of it, although he wanted to bring authentic folk people that in L.A. nobody had ever heard of, or hadn't been really exposed to hillbillies and real black people singing and doing all this stuff. Lightnin' Hopkins and all that.

Being a little younger, I saw myself as more of a new leftist. But as I said, Ed kept changing through the sixties, and certainly being a part of NAM was a part of that, because then he's making a move away from the old Communist Party. And people that were also in NAM at that time that I met, like Dorothy Healy, and there were others. And also, from them, I got an education in their experience all through the Communist Party in the twenties, thirties, and so on.

I started studying all that stuff pretty intently, too. By the time I was doing stuff related to music and politics, I was informed of how the early Left had been

used through Wobbly songs, use that for activism and so on. But eventually, the Communist Party and used it and developed the New Song Movement.

Although there were certain contradictions in it, which I was also aware of. A lot of the people doing the new song weren't really authentic folk singers, so they were like – and even in the folk movement of the sixties, saw a lot of that as kind of phony, and why do you just keep trying to be didactic and go through all this stuff that's already been done. Why don't you write some new songs about what's going on now, and out of your own experience, and so on. So I was a part of that, too.

Ed had a little resistance to some of that, not to say early Dylan when he's writing – or Oaks, writing songs like "The Death of Hattie Carroll" or "Only a Pawn in a Game" or "Masters of War," things like that. But when it starts to blend the personal and the political together, Ed had a harder time getting that. There was some – for instance, if you ever talk to Jackson Browne, Jackson Browne Ed didn't like because he saw him as just being – he didn't understand, Jackson Browne was an activist too, but he wrote these songs that expressed his interior life in a really deep way of his search for meaning. It's very poetic, but it's searching and it's also linked to political vision. But Ed didn't really see that in early Jackson Browne, didn't even want him at the club. Jackson Browne, when I met him, he was saying, "Ed didn't – I don't know about Ed. I had to go to the Troubador. He didn't think I was like a real folk singer."

VC: Oh, really. So the Troubador was where Jackson Browne went.

SC: Yeah, so he had to go there mostly, and Ed wouldn't really have him there.

Although Ed links him now. Ed eventually came to appreciate Jackson Browne,

especially if Jackson became more of an overt activist and got arrested and wrote songs in the eighties about this stuff in Central America and all of that, then Ed could really see it, really appreciate it. Then Jackson, in his experience, he could kind of understand maybe why Ed was reluctant to take him in. Because he was trying to find himself. He didn't think he was that great a writer at that point, or handle his instrument that well.

Jackson was also a person informed by rock and roll and the Beatles and all of that. Ed, at that point, didn't get that as much as he got Pete Seeger and Phil Oaks and Doc Watson and all those people. Later he did. Today he does.

VC: Right. The Beatles came up at one point and he's like, "Oh, I really appreciate what they do." I was kind of shocked.

SC: Well, and that's why he, later I think, enlisted me to work with him in trying to create the new Ash Grove, because he wanted to expand on the vision of the first Ash Grove, to have a lot of different kinds of music, be very culturally diverse, but present things with authentic roots in different communities. But he didn't know all that. Even when I met him, he didn't really – and he's still this way. This may surprise you or not. But he doesn't know anything about records, recorded music. He doesn't know diddly. He couldn't tell you the name of an album hardly, or what's on it, or anything, nothing. I mean, if you were going to talk about Beatles or Dylan or anybody, he couldn't name any album, or where it came from, or anything. But he does know some of the songs, and he does appreciate the songs, and he does appreciate live performance. That's what he really appreciated more than anything else. He liked the idea of putting on a show and having a person

right there delivering it to an audience and seeing and feeling that connection.

That's what he was about. And remains that way, primarily.

But with the Beatles, he couldn't see through the fact of their popularity, because a lot of people on the Left had different points, or had the view that if it's popular, it's bad, and can't see through it to see what the Beatles were doing and their messages, and see how they were also a part of this. Particularly somebody like Lennon, who was the most politically aware and the most into activism and stuff. It took Ed – he still probably struggles with that.

And, like I said, people on the Left struggle with that, and people in various counter-cultures even struggle with that because they've got the idea you sell out if you – instead of seeing that you're trying to reach people and have an impact on the culture. And also, once the Ash Grove ended, Ed was very unfamiliar with any music that came after that, in terms of –

VC: You mean after '73?

SC: Yeah, after '73. He wanted me because I was also writing about music later in *Z Magazine*, and did a thing for a lot of years there. So Ed was reading my stuff and because of that he said, "I want you to do this, and bring that same thing to the club, and also make contact with the musicians," and all of that. I knew a lot of musicians and stuff. So that's why I think that he wanted me to be a part of it.

He also felt like, from the time we met, that I was one of the few people – and Ed is pretty distrustful of a lot of people, and he felt that myself, and there's a few others, Gordy Alexandre, are people that he can trust, and he sees as political people, which automatically that means a certain amount of integrity and you're not

just doing this because it's about music. You're interested in changing the world. He could see that with me and we've been activists together. He knew a lot about what I'd done and all that kind of stuff. He also knew that I was really into the music, and the roots music was what I was especially into. And he's very good at getting people around him that know how to do certain things. So that's how I kind of got pulled in there.

VC: Can I ask you, just for the timeline, you leave Austin in '75 to come to L.A.?

SC: Yeah.

VC: And you came to L.A. with a woman and you guys were both in NAM?

SC: Yeah, we were both in NAM. Then by '76 or so –

VC: You were living in L.A.?

SC: Yeah, I was living in L.A.

VC: Full time.

SC: Full time. But then I went from there to doing a journalist project in Brazil, where, from the University of Texas, I got pulled into a grant. I mean, I didn't get the grant or anything, but I got a chance to go to Brazil on a grant to study what was going on there politically and economically, although the grant was basically a cover for that because it was for, basically, the effect of Texas tourism on Brazil, or something like that. But we got down there. So I lived in Brazil and worked down there digging up all this stuff. This was not long after their coup there that occurred in the seventies, that the U.S. approved of.

VC: How long were you in Brazil?

SC: Well, I was down there about two to three months, in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and then eventually went north. And then came back and wrote about that. I tried to get that published anywhere I could, and some of it was published in NAM newspapers around the country. And then from there I went to the East Coast and worked in NAM on the East Coast, in Boston. Occasionally, Ed and I would hook up at the NAM convention or other NAM gatherings and stuff. Then I did graduate school while I was there.

VC: In Boston?

SC: Yeah, in Boston.

VC: What were you studying, journalism?

SC: No. I got in an independent studies program that was done by Goddard College in Vermont that allowed me to do a program in political psychology, really. That's what it was about. What I was looking at mainly was the socialization of consent, and that kind of thing. I continued to study in Boston, and while I was in Boston I was getting to know a lot of the Left in that area.

VC: Was this in the seventies still?

SC: Yes, this would still be in the seventies.

VC: And you were in NAM this whole time, too.

SC: And I was in NAM the whole time. With this independent studies thing that I was doing, I got to take courses at a lot of different schools in the Boston area, and that included U Mass Amherst, which at that time had just created a kind of an all Marxist economics department.

VC: That was Resnick and Wolff, huh?

SC: And Sam Bowles. So I was out there doing that. And then I was meeting all these people who had also come east to do this. One of them was Mike Alpert, who formed South End Press and then later *Z Magazine*. We became friends, and other people. So then I worked on South End Press for a while as a book editor there. We were trying to launch *Z Magazine* then but couldn't do it, couldn't get the money and everything to do it. Then I left and came back to Texas, and then eventually to California, into the Bay Area.

VC: Was this in the early eighties?

SC: Yeah, early eighties. By then *Z* had started and I started writing for *Z*. As I was doing that, Ed and I reconnected on a more consistent basis.

VC: And you were up in the Bay Area?

SC: And I was in the Bay Area. Then we rendezvoused a few times because – Ed's always done, as he is now, benefits and different projects and different concerts, but he always had in his head, as he does now, of re-launching the Ash Grove. There were several attempts during the eighties, and each time he's asking for my input or something in regard to it. Each time those failed. Then, finally, in the nineties he was saying he thought this time there was going to be some money there and it could happen. I'd always told him that I was absolutely ready to dive into it, because I thought it was valuable, and I loved what he had accomplished before, and his doggedness in always pursuing this, and just absolutely relentless in pursuing this. So that's briefly kind of my path with him and separate from him.

VC: Right. You said when he started the Ash Grove on the pier – I think he told me – you were the booker.

SC: Yeah. My little card said "entertainment manager."

VC: Did you go back to L.A. for that?

SC: Yeah. I went back to L.A., and I'd commute back and forth sometimes, especially during the time that we're trying to get it off the ground, because I don't know if this is really going to work or not so I've got to have some way of making some money, a little bit at least. (laughs) So we were doing that.

As the entertainment manager, it's really we're doing this kind of as a committee, because we're pulling together anybody we can, come over to the club, let's talk. Musicians that we know that are friendly, and people in the industry that we know that are friendly. And some of them became regulars. I would directly book a lot of them, and some of them would be pulled together by somebody else. Ed had the connections to all the older people that he still knew from the old days, that were still around, so he still had his Seeger connection and a lot of the older people. I was getting the younger people, and people from Texas. I knew about the alternative movement, roots music things that had got going. So I was trying to bring all that to the club.

Then there were a few people that knew what was percolating in the L.A. club scenes, or in England and in British folk music circles. We knew this time we wanted to bring in not just things from the United States, we wanted things from around the world. So we were bringing in Afro-Cuban jazz. And jazz. We wanted jazz to be more of a part of this club. And other things like that. That's what I was doing.

Now, it included a lot of other stuff, too, for anybody that's working the club, because you work the doors, you do advertising. Ed and I together were kind of spokespersons for the club so we would go around and do radio on – what's the eclectic one down there at –

VC: Oh, KCOW.

SC: KCOW. We did them. In fact, they let us do a Labor Day program where we had the radio station all day. We did a whole thing on the history of Labor Day and just talking politics, and played music that fit that.

VC: This is KCOW, not KPFK?

SC: No, that was on KCOW. They let us do that. Because they were very supportive of the club then. And we did go on KPFK, and wherever else we could. We'd go on the blues programs down there and talk about the blues and tell them when we'd have a blues guy coming in and stuff like that. In that community, the Ash Grove still had a strong reputation because of everything they had done with blues before, and so many of the younger players had been at the Ash Grove, learning at the Ash Grove. So we did all that. And pulling benefits together. But constantly dealing with the finances and stuff like that, which has always been an issue with Ed. So that's basically what I was doing.

I was probably the one dealing more face-to-face with the musicians, too. Sometimes because maybe I knew them better, but also because Ed can antagonize a lot of people. (chuckles) I'm not telling you anything that you haven't heard or won't hear again, and he's still that way. It makes him really difficult to work with. And he doesn't respect too many people. I think I'm one, and a few others, that he

does, so you can tell him things, or tell him he's off his rocker, or whatever, and eventually, after he throws his tirade, he'll come back to earth and settle down a little bit.

But, whether it's the old Ash Grove or the second one, Ed always had a thorny difficult relationship with the music industry, with a lot of musicians, a lot of money issues, sometimes people feeling like they got ripped off or something. I don't think Ed ever did anything like that intentionally, and he's not materialistic, as you know. He's lived meagerly all his life, has no interest in it at all. If anybody got underpaid, or didn't get their pay, it's because of just him not paying attention, mostly, and not being focused. But, nevertheless, he gets a bad reputation for that.

And also the way he treats musicians sometimes can be rude and alienating, because part of it is just his gruff manner, but some of it is he doesn't want any hint of show biz from the musician, or he's antagonized by that, and he doesn't want any sense of ego, like you think you're special. In pure folk music, there's not supposed to be a distance between the performer and the audience. You're one and the same, an idealized thing. This is why people are drawn to it in the first place. Anybody can do it. There's not a gap between performer and audience. You come out of the same community, and all of that. That's what he's trying to replicate. So it makes it difficult.

When we were trying to re-launch the Ash Grove, Ed was saying, "I've got all these friends and they'll come and they'll play." Well, a lot of those people don't want to come and play. It took us forever to get Ry Cooder back here to play. And Taj Mahal never came to that particular venue, although we would have had him

eventually, probably. He didn't rush out to do it. He did show for the fiftieth anniversary and did a really nice job, and so did Ry Cooder. Eventually, those are pretty good relationships. But a lot of other people that could have helped the club financially, and also with their appearance, they didn't help. The Roger McQuinnns and Jackson Brownes and Linda Ronstadt and Bonnie Raitt, they never did anything there.

So I was the person that could help with some of that and kind of minimize the difficulties. And some musicians who were particularly helpful, like especially Dave Alvin. He and his brother Phil – now, Phil was never around, but they, as young people, had come to the Ash Grove and seen all the blues legends and bluegrass and country legends and stuff. It was like a school for them, or a church, or both. And they're forever grateful for it, especially Dave. Anything he can do to help the Ash Grove, and he wrote that song about the Ash Grove. He had an album out a few years ago and it was actually called "Ash Grove," in which he traces his life from the Ash Grove forward to today. And then he's saying, "I want to go back to the Ash Grove" is the refrain that keeps coming through as he talks about kind of a pure time and a passion and idealism that was ignited there.

Dave, any time he was in town, he was often at the club for shows, to watch other people. He was there to do benefits, he was there to perform and help with when we were doing Songwriters in the Round things, on an off night. And helping us to get five or six good people together to swap songs and stuff. So a person like him, really helpful.

Another guy named Bob Glaub, who was a bass player, used to play with all kinds of people, like John Fogerty and Credence and all kinds of other people. Pretty well known. But a sense of politics, and also another person that knew about the early Ash Grove. These people were very helpful. We'd have them, when they were in town, to be at the meetings and come up with ideas to get people in there.

VC: Was it hard getting people down to the new club?

SC: The audience or the musicians?

VC: The audience.

SC: Well, initially, yeah, because it takes a while for a club to establish an identity, especially in L.A.. And unlike when Ed did the first Ash Grove, it's so much more expensive. He could start that first Ash Grove on very little money and keep it going, and advertising could be done – a lot of it was just handbills and leaflets and stuff, and not too much in the newspaper or anything. But now, starting the second one, we didn't have enough money and we couldn't advertise a whole lot. We couldn't put ads in like the Hollywood clubs or the Troubador or anybody else. Eventually, we got more and more.

By the time the second one was coming to an end, we were picked as the best club in L.A., and we had all kinds of great shows. And just the people that played during that time, that's an extraordinary roster of people that played. I'll show you a list which I've got. It's a fantastic collection of people there. And a lot of them who the people didn't know too well then, like Gillian Welch, but know a lot now about her. She was there. And all the Texas songwriters came out—Guy Clark and Townes Van Zandt, before he died. And then we had Dylan's friend

Bobby Neuwirth, and we of course had Cooder and Van Dyke Parks and great jazz people. And Alvin there a lot. I'll show you the list. The younger blues people that were trying to reintroduce Delta blues in their rural forms, like Corey Harris and others. Youngblood Hart. So we're getting all those people, and then we're also trying to bring in jazz singers and Afro-Cuban people. We did that. Some of the biggest bands in Cuba we had in here, and African music. Did all that.

But the political climate's so different, it made it really hard for the club to survive. The first club lived and breathed in that atmosphere and was so much a part of it, and trying to do the same thing when there's not popular movements for change made it more difficult. And the huge amount of money that it takes nowadays to sustain something like that, especially in an L.A. environment. So that the club was, from the beginning, under-funded. Ed's hope, or all of us, the hope was that we could hang on through the first year, which would be rough, and then by the end other investors would see – because this was being run, unlike the other one, by creating a board and getting investors. You have to deal with a board and all that, which Ed, of course, didn't like. He'd be hard to handle, and so on. But that eventually we'd get other investors to come in and keep it going, and the club would go. I think that actually could have happened, but there were just a lot of different issues there.

I think when you get a board involved, you get, again, especially at that particular time, you get people that do want the club to make money and do see it in more corporate terms. Ed has no stomach for that. I mean, I don't have any stomach for it either, and hate those compromises, and hated having to answer in

some ways, to go there and justify who you book, on that basis. And to be talking to people that don't know anything about the performer, or even care, for that matter, or understand what you're doing in a particular show. Or even understand when you introduce a young artist, you can't expect them to have a big draw immediately. But you're building a relationship there, and we're recognizing really extraordinary talent.

I mean, when we were having Gillian Welch come there, it was one of her first gigs in L.A. But they don't know that, they can't see that, they can't recognize that. Unless you can pop a name in their head that they immediately recognize, like you could say, Oh, Pete Seeger's going to come out and do a show, then they could see that. But this is not a club for rock stars or something like that. We're going to draw five hundred people into the club, that's what we want. Or we'd rent a bigger venue if we had somebody that could draw more than that, or we'd do two shows, or something like that. But they're not going to ride with that too long.

VC: Who invested in the club? Who backed it?

SC: Well, it'd be surprising who's on there. Some of it was going out, talking to people, and just getting people to put in twenty-five, fifty thousand dollars, or whatever.

So you might get Harrison Ford, for instance. He gave twenty-five thousand dollars. He gave twenty-five thousand dollars largely because before he made it in movies, Paul Rothschild – do you know him? – he was an early producer of a lot of folk and blues albums, on small labels. But he became a pretty respected producer there. Then he was moved to being a producer for Electra, which was a bigger

label. Then, eventually, he was the producer of The Doors, so he made a lot of money.

Harrison Ford was his carpenter, working on his house. Paul Rothschild had given Harrison Ford a chance to make a little money when he was a struggling actor not making anything. So Paul Rothschild was on the board, so Paul Rothschild and people like him would go and talk to their friends and get some money, and they'd put in some money. That's how the money was raised. I didn't do this, but people would go around and pitch the business plan.

Then the city council there in Santa Monica, they were all for it, so they'd give the Ash Grove breaks on things and wanted this to revitalize the pier, so they were really friendly to the idea.

A thing that I really didn't get until I was back there working, probably in the nineties, was the extraordinary – I mean, I knew it before, but it hit me in a more profound way. So many people in L.A. loved the club, and they talked about it with such love and such devotion and with powerful vivid memories in their head, and would talk about how it had transformed their lives. I couldn't believe it. So many people wanted it to come back, were desperate for it to come back. Musicians, too. When we opened, they were, Oh, we can't wait. Because we weren't like the other clubs. We weren't like Hollywood people. Musicians come and you sit down and you talk with them, or we'd plan a show out together.

One of the great shows we did was like a tribute to Townes Van Zandt after he died. His wife came out, and we had all these musicians come from all over the country to play there, and did an all day show. They'd come out. A lot of them are

just doing it for free, except we're trying to pay for their air fare or something, and they're sleeping on the floor in somebody's house, and then we're sitting there and planning the show, and the order, and the songs, and all that kind of thing. That doesn't happen at these other places, and all these musicians were dying for a club like this to come back to life.

There's clubs that do that, but not as fully and not with as much commitment and stuff. And certainly not with the overall vision. This reputation had traveled and endured, and I really didn't get how deep it was until doing that.

VC: Why do you think it didn't do better?

SC: The second time around?

VC: Mm-hmm.

SC: I think it could have survived and could have continued to grow and be close to what we wanted it to be. I mean, it would certainly help if we were living in a time of more popular political movements. I think then the club really would thrive. We realized that limit, too, but we were hoping that we could at least be a house that could keep the vision alive until things got bigger. But I think the political cultural climate, the different economic climate, the difference in the music business, all that had a huge, huge, huge impact.

In the time of the first Ash Grove, Ed could have a performer come out and spend a week, like Lightnin' Hopkins, come out and spend a week, stay in somebody's house, and pay him fifty dollars a day, or whatever. The economics were just much easier to handle then, and you didn't have to worry about

advertising, and you didn't have to worry about booking agents so much, and all of that kind of stuff. And now we did.

The music industry, for the kind of music that Ed was doing the first go-around, had barely touched. Now, just about everybody that plays music, they can't survive unless they're selling records, or having some connection to commercial music, even if they start their own label. And certainly, if Ed had better ties to the music industry, and better ties to some of the musicians that could have helped a lot, because it wouldn't have taken much financial help from somebody that's really, really got it, like say Bonnie Raitt, to keep the Ash Grove going by herself for a year, or several other people.

I think that could have also maybe happened if we could have sustained it, because near the end we had a lot more people – we did have people who were showing up that do have money. I mean, the Coen brothers, for instance, were there frequently, because they loved the music that we were presenting. Bruce Springsteen's producer was there all the time. Dylan's manager was on the board at that time. Dylan was aware of what was going on at the club, and I think he would have eventually done something. His son, not Jacob Dylan but another son who's a photographer, he was at the club. All of these people, I think a lot of them didn't know it existed at first, and then they were waiting to see what it was going to do and if it could survive.

But they knew that we were there and they knew kind of what we were trying to do, and they would come out for certain things that we're doing that nobody else is doing. Like we had Ralph Stanley play there. And we brought

north Mississippi musicians there, like R.L. Burnside, which would be out there for the first time from Mississippi that nobody in L.A. knew about. This is like an untouched realm of blues almost, so when they're there, all these people show up. T-Bone Burnett shows up, and John Fogerty, and Don Was, this big producer, and all them, they're there. They're not being assholes or anything, they're not demanding special treatment. They appreciate what you're doing. They appreciate that you brought these people out, because this is who *they* respect, and this is what their music is rooted in. But it just wasn't right for it.

The other thing is, I think Ed was – and I don't want to say it's only Ed because it's all of us that were trying to do this – was really getting frustrated and burnt out dealing with these people that we're having to deal with sometimes. I mean, the frustrations of that, dealing with people that – there's a big gap between a lot of the people that are one the board and us. They don't have the same politics, they don't have the same vision, they don't fully understand what we're trying to do.

And just as the first Ash Grove got into eventually – I mean, there's so many things that happened at the first Ash Grove from having meetings with the Black Panther Party there, having people come there to meet, then take off on the Freedom Rides and voter registration and all that kind of stuff. We wanted to use the club in the same way, and all of that's going to cause huge problems in the nineties. It caused problems in the community before, the first club, but mainly because of political antagonism stirred up in the Cuban community, or another right-wing community. But now the problem would be somebody more with a corporate attitude saying you can't be doing that, or you're wasting time, or it's not

bringing in any money, or that kind of stuff. I think those are some of the big things.

VC: It's a striking change, culturally, since the time the Ash Grove opened, and even when it burned down the third time, till now.

SC: Yeah, definitely, definitely. And it's, again, hard for people that didn't live through that to see what it was like. And the people that worked there at the Ash Grove, from the people that were making food, working the door, whatever, felt like they were all part of this. And it wasn't even like you're part of the Ash Grove. You're part of this whole thing known as, loosely, the movement. It's all what we're doing is part of that, and that's our function in life. Yet, at the new Ash Grove, which had a bar in it and served food, people were working there that just – it's a job. Totally different attitude. Now you like it because it's kind of cool. It's on the Santa Monica Pier, and a lot of the music is really cool and everything, but it's not like they're working there because it fits exactly their sense of who they are and what they want to do with their lives, or anything like that. So it's really different in that sense.

We would have *some* young people like that, and younger people who were sons or daughters of musicians, who knew about the club and what we were trying to do. For instance, we had Richard Thompson's son, Teddy, working the doors and stuff, before he made a record. He was totally nice, unpretentious, just grateful to be there. And other people who knew kind of about the old Ash Grove and knew what we were doing in this new place, but not as many.

VC: Do you want to stop there?

SC: It's up to you.

VC: I could keep asking questions all day, but we've been going for about an hour and twenty.

SC: Okay. Whatever you want to do. I'm open.

VC: What lists did you bring?

SC: Let me see what we've got here. Actually, you know what? I don't think I've got anything in here that you might not have seen, like on the Ash Grove's website now, the one that they've got.

VC: Yeah. I've looked through that a little bit.

SC: I think it lists that. This is a bunch of stuff that I just pulled together. Let's see. This is stuff from the fiftieth anniversary show. Have you seen all this kind of stuff?

VC: Oh, no.

SC: You can actually take that, if you want.

VC: That'd be great.

SC: Because I've got a bunch of them.

VC: So you were heavily involved with the reunion, fiftieth anniversary.

SC: Yeah.

VC: What was that like?

SC: Well, that was really fun, because you brought back a lot of the people who had worked at the club over the years to help with it. Have you interviewed Gordy Alexandre yet? Gordy and I were kind of Ed's right-hand people to deal with the artists, get them on the stage on time, make sure they're happy, get the order of the

show down, do some of the emcee stuff, and do workshops and coordinate a lot of the stuff. There's a whole lot of people doing different things. Some people are just getting the musicians in, some people were doing the sound checks and doing all that. That was great. We did a lot of interviews for radio and press for that.

And doing the workshops. Because it was organized a little bit like a festival, so all over UCLA there'd be a workshop over here on bluegrass, or a workshop on politics and music, whatever. Those were really great. And we did some small song swap things that were not on the main stage. Then at night we'd have the big show, where you have like a five or six hour show. There were really some extraordinary performances for that. It was a great thing. And it was sold out. Great sound and some really great performances.

Taj Mahal was great one night, and we had Bernice Reagon from Sweet Honey in the Rock, and she goes way, way back to the early Civil Rights Movement. She was out with the Freedom Singers and they did stuff like they did back then. And Ry Cooder performed with Seeger, not Pete Seeger but Mike Seeger, before he died. They put together an amazing blend of music and song that was – Ry bringing his blues guitar into like really ancient Appalachian music. That was really great. Ben Harper played, a younger person coming in. Some people that didn't have a direct link to the early Ash Grove but either played the new Ash Grove or were in some way linked to the tradition. So Dave Alvin came again, and a lot of people like that.

Ben Harper was there just because his mother used to always go to the Ash Grove and always talked the Ash Grove, so he felt like it was one of the things that

gave his music its foundation and influenced what he played and everything, and he always wanted to play there. He's another one that we hoped would have played there at the new one, people like him.

Let's see where that is. Maybe it's in here. Most of this press stuff is available on the Ash Grove website, I think.

VC: I'll have to look up some of your stuff on –

SC: Michelle Shocked played there that day.

VC: Did you have a column in *Z Magazine*?

SC: Yeah. It was called "Slippin' and Slidin'" and if you go into the archives there's a big catalog of articles. Not everything, but a pretty big catalog.

VC: What do you do nowadays?

SC: Nowadays, I'm – here's one thing. This is kind of the basis of some of the things that I did at the workshop. This is a little bit more highfalutin, in the early days of *Z*. It's like a two or three part article that dealt with left politics in music. But today I'm a high school teacher.

VC: Great.

SC: Yeah.

VC: Well, this is wonderful, this "Popular Music and the Left." Can I get this online?

SC: That one's not online, I don't think. But I'll make some copies of that, if you want.

VC: Oh, I'd love a copy.

SC: And I'll mail it to you. It's at least a two-part thing, and each one's about that same length. I'll give that to you.

VC: Wonderful.

SC: You probably saw –

VC: Yeah, that's the list they have online.

SC: That's the list. Maybe this other list isn't here, but here's some of the people we had at the second one.

VC: John Fahey. Oh, Nels Cline.

SC: Yeah. Nels Cline was playing there, and he was bringing over different kinds of groups. These are all the singer-songwriter types, and a lot of these from Texas, like Jimmy Lafave, Van Zandt, Tom Russell, the blues guys. Jack Elliott played there again. Maria Muldaur, Del McCoury, Peter Rowan Bluegrass Band, Kelly Joe Phelps. Do you know him?

VC: No, I don't know him.

SC: He's an extraordinary guitar player and writes in the blues-folk vein. Chuck Prophet, who did song swaps. He's kind of an alternative rock guy. Bobby Neuwirth, who was one of Dylan's friends in the sixties, but who is a songwriter in his own right and writes a lot with all kinds of people. T-Bone Burnett. Gillian Welch and David Rollins were there. Richard Buckner, who's a young guy who got to play at the club and said it was the biggest honor of his life when he was there. And Dan Bern, who was starting out then. Steve Young, Ralph Stanley, Forbert, Peter Case, Mike Seeger, Laurel Canyon Ramblers, Herb Peterson and Chris Hillman.

VC: I don't know them.

SC: Chris Hillman was in The Byrds and the Flying Burrito Brothers, then he's continued on solo and been doing kind of a hard country band with Herb Peterson,

who does all kinds of country-oriented things. Jim Lauderdale. Van Dyke Parks, a big name. Randy Newman was there. Indigo Girls. Cajun music. This is the bunch of Irish stuff that we did, big bands in Ireland who were really good. Solas, Dervish, Begley and Cooney. Had the Texas Playboys, a version of the Texas Playboys come out, all these guys that had played with Bob Wills.

VC: Like Texas swing.

SC: Texas swing. All of them are pretty old now, but God, still so good, so good.

VC: Really. I love Bob Wills.

SC: They loved, loved playing there and couldn't even believe that we had them out.

VC: I think Ed told me about that show. He said that there were more people there than he's ever seen.

SC: Could be, because that was a very successful show, and they were elated. They knew about the first Ash Grove. And they're a perfect band for Ed because they've got a sense of history and clearly know where the music comes from and their relationship to it, and also wanting it to stay alive. So they were really glad to be there.

Laura Love's the young – she's now in her thirties, but she was a young name at the time, who is a black woman whose father was Preston Love, R&B singer. She does real feminist stuff, as well as social commentary on everything. She blends folk music with different world musics, American folk music and R&B with different rhythms from around the world and stuff. Really catching and did our workshop.

Eric Anderson is from the sixties. These are younger singer-songwriters. Lauderdale started at the same time as Dave Alvin and Los Lobos and all these people. They're blues people. Mark Simpson's a British singer. Another Texas woman. Irish-oriented group, the _____. Blues people that were real popular in the L.A. area, and some of them from up here. Like Tommy Caxton was up here. Joe Louis Walker's based up here. He's one of my neighbors down the road, and I had him come down. But he's _____.

Angela Strehli started off in Austin at the time Stevie Ray Vaughn was coming up, and they were in a group together called the Cobras. Then she eventually went off on her own. She eventually helped start Anton's in Austin, and Anton's record label. Now she's up here living not too far from where I do. She and her husband started a little club out there.

VC: Up in Novato.

SC: Outside. A little small town called Nicasio, which is just a few hundred people, but it's got a roadhouse in it that goes way back to – I think to the 1920s. But they got it and renovated it. It's a great place to play, and they have these Sunday barbecues and people come and play outdoors. Some of these people have come there.

VC: Wow. That's amazing.

SC: Ozamotli became really big in L.A. when we were there. We were the first people to have them.

VC: Did they know the history of the club? Had they heard of it?

SC: They had, but then as they got more into it, they understood it better. They're real political guys too, so they knew what we were wanting to do. This is like a perfect

venue for them, so they loved playing there. They're a perfect example of the kind of artists that we wanted. Cubanismo! was a really big Afro-Cuban group that we had. That was sold out. Then we'd have these African nights where we'd get a bunch of African – it's amazing. When we have those things going on, it would be like somehow we were in Africa. And not African Americans. All the African community in L.A. would come out. There'd just be a few white faces. Us. And everybody else in the club, it's like where did this place drop from? It would be transformed completely. The same when we'd do the Cuban night. Also on Sundays we were doing like salsa afternoons, where the Hispanic community would come over and dance to different salsa stuff that we'd put in. Or we'd bring in a band or something.

I think this list is available to you on the website, but if you give me your address when you leave today, I'll mail you some of that stuff that's not on the website.

VC: That'd be great. It's hard to believe it didn't do well, with all those acts. I mean, San Francisco likes this music, and Seattle likes the music, but so does L.A.

SC: I know.

VC: Do you think the traffic patterns – I hate to be so –

SC: Well, yeah. That did, too. We're way out there on the pier, and that's not easy to get to if you're out in the Valley somewhere, or down south, or slightly north. It's real convenient if you live in Malibu or Santa Monica or something, but not so much for other people. I didn't think of that one as much, but L.A. has also become much bigger and hard to negotiate.

VC: Yeah. I have a question for you. I wanted to ask you about the NAM merger with DSOC. Were you still involved with NAM when that happened?

SC: Yeah.

VC: What did you think of the merger? Were you in Boston at the time, or back in –

SC: I was probably in Boston. What year was that?

VC: Eighty-two. I mean, it was formalized I think in '82, but it probably would have been on the table since '80, even '79, depending on what chapter you were in.

SC: Well, at that point, I was probably getting more involved with South End Press, getting them going, and trying to launch the magazine. I'm trying to think what I was thinking back then. I think I thought, or would have thought, it was a bad move. In the early eighties, I would have probably thought we were becoming more of a social democratic group in terms of politics, and I was probably still a little too pure to go in that direction.

NAM was having all these increasingly – we went through all the changes that you might expect young people to go through, where you got people thinking you weren't far enough or militant enough to the Left, so you had to become a Marxist-Leninist. So the Marxist-Leninist faction started in NAM. And people that were frustrated with NAM's middle-class white base. So part of the move towards Leninism was that, thought that's what you had to do to reach that base. Or other people saying if we're going to reach that base, we gotta be out in those communities, and not just in Cambridge, if it's Boston, or around the campus, or those kinds of things.

Because of all those kinds, I think, of issues kind of creeping in there, and losing some of the unity, but also the momentum was dropping out of left politics by the mid-seventies – for sure by then – that we were on a downhill slide then as far as NAM went.

By then, I also had lost some of my enthusiasm for NAM and thinking that another organization had to be created. At one time, I was even talking to a bunch of people in NAM about doing that. We never got very far with it. Barbara Ehrenreich being one. She was in there and I was pretty good friends with her. She was also close to helping with the launching of the magazine, and wanted to help with South End Press. She and I and others had been a part of really raising kind of a class critique of NAM within NAM around the time that she and her then husband John Ehrenreich had written about the professional managerial class, and then I had an essay in her book the South End Press wrote about that.

One of the things we were talking about, while we didn't single out NAM, was about the very narrow white middle-class, or upper-middle-class, base of NAM, which we were beginning to label the professional managerial class, people that were basically being trained to be managers of the working class, and using – like NAM had a broad definition of the working class, so it's not just blue collar workers, but that so many in NAM in particular, and the Left in general, came from backgrounds where their parents were teachers and lawyers and doctors, relatively privileged. I didn't come from that background, but coming into it I was one of those who was made almost class conscious by that reality. Hey, these are not the people I grew up with.

So raising those issues from within the organization about lots of things, the way that you treat people when they come to meetings who are from working class backgrounds, or people of color that come to meetings, the different ways of elitism being expressed and the way the group is dominated by people that have PhD's and so on, while other people are coming in with not too much more than a high school education. She was doing that too, but these were things that were sparking discontent in me too. And not necessarily being antagonistic towards other people who felt differently, but just feeling that, in this kind of an organization, we couldn't grow. It, from the beginning, had been that way, and it was not going to change.

So maybe you needed an organization that from the very beginning started with working class people, or had a broader mix of working class people and people of color. Not that you couldn't have upper-middle-class people or middle-class people or intellectuals or anything like that, not becoming anti-intellectual, but feeling you just had to have a different kind of base. And from the very beginning having different organizing strategies. Being in a community and being working on things that the community is engaged in, whether it's day-to-day bread and butter issues or schools, or whatever, all those things, which, overall, NAM never made a big impact on that level, when I was in it.

VC: That's true, from all the things I've heard and read and people I've talked to. Thank you for that. I'm going to hit stop.

[end]